DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 179 RC 015 665

AUTHOR Camarillo, Albert
TITLE Blacks and Hispanics in Urban America: Some Comparative Historical Perspectives. Working Paper Series No. 3.
INSTITUTION Stanford Univ., CA. Stanford Center for Chicano Research.
PUB DATE May 84
NOTE 14p.
AVAILABLE FROM Stanford Center for Chicano Research, Stanford University, P.O. Box 9341, Stanford CA 94305 ($3.00 plus postage).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black History; *Blacks; Comparative Analysis; *Cultural Differences; *Employment Patterns; Ghettos; Mexican American History; *Mexican Americans; Minority Groups; Occupational Mobility; Racial Segregation; *Residential Patterns; *Urban Population
IDENTIFIERS Barrios; *Chicanos

ABSTRACT

Comparative analysis of urban history illuminates similar general patterns of occcupation and residence for Blacks and Chicanos from the late nineteenth century to World War II. Distinct Black and Chicano neighborhoods in American cities were the products of "ghettoization" and "barrioization." Ghetto expansion during the early twentieth century was the result of rural-to-urban migration of southern Blacks, while barrios emerged because of the massive immigration from Mexico due to economic and political upheavals of the Mexican Revolution. While more overt racial legislation was directed toward Blacks, indices of residential segregation, socioeconomic status, ghetto and barrio subculture, segregative real estate covenants, and other similarities clearly emerge from comparative analysis. Analyses of occupational structure and immobility over time provide evidence that further distinguishes these two minorities from European immigrant groups. Although Blacks and Chicanos suffered similar disadvantages in the urban labor market as had prior immigrants (rural handicaps, lack of education, lack of job skills), additional circumstances of race and class that created and maintained their residential segregation account for their occupational segregation and immobility at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, with males in unskilled, menial labor and females in domestic services. (NEC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

BLACKS AND HISPANICS IN URBAN AMERICA: SOME COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

by

Albert Camarillo

Working Paper Series No. 3

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Catherine A. Berbeni

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

APR 1986
RECEIVED
ERIC/CRESS

BLACKS AND HISPANICS IN URBAN AMERICA: SOME COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

by

Albert Camarillo

Working Paper Series No. 3

May 1984

Recent publications in Afro-American history have made valuable contributions to the existing literature on blacks in the cities. Similarly, an emerging body of literature focusing on Chicanos is beginning to provide insights into the urban experience of the nation's second largest and fastest growing minority. The two major national minority groups, however, have been studied in isolation. Given the parallels that exist between the urban experiences of blacks and Chicanos, it is important that scholars study these two groups in comparative perspective. Any analysis of the history of race relations as well as class relations cannot be fully explained without equal attention paid to both groups. Moreover, historians examining the changing nature and interface of class and race in American society may gain valuable insight into these phenomena through comparative analysis of the two principal minorities in the United States.

This paper is a preliminary attempt to analyze comparatively the urban history of blacks and Chicanos. Though there are several comparative historical dimensions that must be examined--such as occupational status, residential patterns, racism and racial violence, internal socioeconomic stratification within each group, and other topics--it is only the first two that this paper treats. By focusing on the general patterns of occupation and residence for blacks and Chicanos from the late nineteenth century to World War II, this paper seeks to illuminate some group comparisons and contrasts. Thus, necessarily this paper is suggestive rather than comprehensive, and general rather than specific. It is, however, part of a much larger study that will examine Chicano urban history in relation to the black experience in American cities.

Ghettoization and Barrioization

Distinct black and Chicano neighborhoods in American cities are products of the processes of ghettoization and barrioization. Residential segregation is the most obvious feature of these processes during the period 1880 to 1940. But ghettoization and barrioization were more complex and dynamic than can be explained by residential segregation alone. Both were part of the larger trends of urbanization and industrialization. Both were affected by de facto and legal restrictions and by the prevailing attitudes of the dominant white society. Both were shaped by the internal forces operating in their respective populations--the desire to locate near their own people and to establish their folkways and institutions in an urban milieu. And, both were shaped by the external societal forces which confined blacks and Chicanos to their own sections of a city.

The internal and external forces that created the nation's ghettos and barrios are not static. They have changed over time and have been affected by local and regional variations of the economy, as well as by the social and political structures of individual cities. Though change has characterized the ghettos and barrios in the United States, the significance of these racially segregated communities is their persistence. In contemporary urban America, where white immigrant ghettos have all but disappeared (with some notable exceptions however), black and Chicano communities are anomalies.

The patterns of residential segregation of urban blacks and Chicanos were institutionalized by World War II. The geographically well-defined barrios and ghettos were shaped during the same period from different

origins but with similar effects. Clearly, the origins of Chicano and black urban communities were vastly different. The Chicano urban experience dates from the Mexican War of 1848 when Mexicans living in the conquered lands became part of the annexation of the new territories. Within a generation Mexican pueblos in the new American Southwest became Chicano barrios as Anglos immigrated to these growing towns. Bringing their economy, their institutions, and their negative racial attitudes toward Mexicans, Anglos exerted powerful forces that initiated a socioeconomic and political transformation of the region. As the burgeoning American cities took root, Chicanos in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Antonio, El Paso, Santa Fe, Tucson and elsewhere were forced to insulate themselves in their pueblo-barrios. There they adapted themselves to a new urban reality by creating social and cultural institutions that made their lives more tolerable. The barrio as an improverished, segregated, and racially maligned district in most Southwestern cities symbolized the status of Chicano city dwellers by the turn of the century.[1]

Much like the emerging barrios of the late nineteenth century, evolving black ghettos were characterized by increasing geographical segregation, by impoverishment, and by intense racial attitudes. Ghetto origins, however, differ markedly from barrios. Though blacks, both slaves and freedmen, inhabited cities in the South and North during the antebellum period, distinct ghetto formation came toward the end of the century. Prior residential dispersion of blacks began to give way to greater population concentration as southern rural to northern urban migration increased. By the turn of the century this migration pattern

was entrenched. This movement northward comprised southern blacks who suffered acute agricultural unemployment and who grew more disillusioned during the post-Reconstruction era of increased racial oppression, symbolized by the institutionalization of Jim Crow laws. Though northern cities were perhaps no better than southern cities in their treatment of blacks, blacks nonetheless perceived them as places of relative freedom.[2]

From plantation to ghetto and from pueblo to barrio, urban blacks and Chicanos had evolved from quite different origins. By 1915, however, the differences between their origins as urban dwellers were becoming less obvious as the ghettos and barrios shared a similar status relative to the dominant white society. By World War I southwestern barrios and northern and southern ghettos had expanded tremendously, marking the beginning of their institutionalization on the urban scene. Now they were on parallel paths of development. For both Chicanos and blacks similar patterns of migration, residential segregation, and economic impoverishment reinforced the initial processes of barrioization and ghettoization.

Specific variation existed, however, within these processes during the early twentieth century. For example, the ghetto expansion in the North, and to a lesser extent in the South, was the result of an unprecendented volume of rural-to-urban migration of southern blacks. The geographical boundaries of established ghettos in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and others exploded as the post-war Great Migrations reached tidal wave proportions. Newer ghettos, such as those in Cleveland and Detroit, also received tens of thousands of newcomers. These migrants had fled the rural South for many reasons: from the

decline of cotton agriculture, to the destruction caused by floods, to the attraction of northern industrial jobs.[3]

At precisely the same time as the modern black ghettos were being consolidated, Chicano barrios experienced similar circumstances though in different contexts. The emergence of modern-day barrios was also attributable largely to a "great Northern" migration--north from Mexico. This migration, too, included rural-to-urban movement within the Southwest, but more importantly, it was due to massive immigration from Mexico. Forced from their homeland due to the economic and political upheavals caused by the Mexican Revolution, and attracted to the United States labor market, between 750,000 and 1,500,000 Mexicanos entered the United States during the period 1900 to 1930. With increasing frequency these people migrated to southwestern cities where the burgeoning industrial and service-oriented economies provided employment opportunities. They dramatically expanded the old pueblo-barrios in cities such as Los Angeles, San Antonio and El Paso, while at the same time creating new barrios in Chicago, Gary, Detroit, Minneapolis, Omaha, Kansas City, and other cities in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions.[4]

By World War II Chicanos and blacks were highly urbanized populations confined primarily to geographically distinct zones in the major cities of the United States. Between 1910 and 1940, for example, the proportion of black urban dwellers increased from 17% to nearly 50% of the total Negro population. In the northern states, 88% of all blacks resided in cities, the vast majority in well-defined ghettos.[5] Most Chicanos, likewise, resided in cities by the eve of the Great Depression.

The great majority of these Chicanos also resided in segregated areas, oftentimes described as Mexican cities within American cities.[6]

Analyzing the factors that have shaped the ghettos and barrios from approximately 1880 to 1940 one can point to several differences in the barrioization and ghettoization processes. More overt racial legislation, for example, was directed toward blacks. Regional, cultural, institutional, and familial differences further characterize each group's distinctive experiences in cities. Yet, within this distinctiveness lies unmistakable evidence of similar experiences forged from similar circumstances.

When one synthesizes, for example, Kenneth Kusmer's, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1880-1930, Gilbert Osofsky's, Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Allan Spear's, Black Chicago, Karl and Alma Tauber's Negroes in Cities, and Theodore Hershberg's study on blacks in Philadelphia, the structural relationships of blacks and Chicanos in urban society are clear. When read in comparative perspective the studies written by Ricardo Romo and Pedro Castillo on Chicanos in early twentieth-century Los Angeles, the books by Richard Griswold del Castillo (The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890), Mario Garcia (The Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920), and my own book (Chicanos in a Changing Society) illuminate the commonalities between the two major minority groups. Indices of residential segregation, socioeconomic status, ghetto and barrio subculture, segregative real estate covenants, and other similarities clearly emerge from comparative analyses. In the larger perspective, the persistence of black ghettos and Chicano barrios over time are testaments to the pervasiveness of racial and class factors

that have affected these two groups in ways fundamentally different from other urban subgroups.

Occupational Status and Mobility

In addition to the persistency of barrios and ghettos, nothing is more plainly comparable between blacks and Chicanos than their occupational history in American cities. Analyses of occupational structure and immobility over time provide evidence that further distinguishes these two minorities from European immigrant groups.

Of course, differential urban economies and differential rates of industrialization during different periods of economic growth in the Northeast, South and Southwest help explain the variations in their occupational structure. But after taking these factors into account, the general occupational status of both groups becomes discernible. From the few studies that have systematically examined black or Chicano working class patterns between 1850 and 1940 similar occupational trends are apparent. The research conducted by Thernstrom, Hershberg, and Kusmer indicate that the black occupational structure in northern cities was constricting in the lowest levels of blue collar work while skilled and semiskilled blacks were displaced by European immigrants. By the turn of the century blacks were concentrated principally at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy with males in unskilled, menial labor and females in the domestic services. During subsequent decades the gap between black and white workers widened as black occupational mobility was negligible and entrance into most labor unions was barred. Incorporation

into unskilled and semiskilled industrial jobs did not occur until the 1920s for most blacks.[7]

Chicano occupational status, though significantly different in origins, nonetheless resembles the black experience in many ways. Chicanos entered the capitalist labor market only after the Mexican pastoral economy had been displaced. By the late nineteenth century they, too, were relegated to unskilled menial labor in the expanding, pre-industrial cities of the Southwest. Studies by Garcia, Romo, Camarillo, Barrera, Castillo and others show that by 1917 Chicanos were being incorporated into the developing industrial and service-sector economies of southwestern and midwestern cities. Like blacks they were primarily unskilled construction laborers, factory and service workers. Chicano occupational mobility, moreover, was practically non-existent before 1940.[8]

Surely, blacks and Chicanos suffered similar disadvantages in the urban labor market as had prior migrants--rural handicaps, lack of education, lack of job skills, etc. But other groups had overcome these hurdles, why not the last of the so-called immigrants? Evidently, additional circumstances were operating that made the occupational status of several generations of blacks and Chicanos significantly different from that of European immigrants and their offspring. The circumstances that had created and maintained their residential segregation undoubtedly accounted for their occupational segregation and immobility. Analysis of the forces behind their differential occupational history may provide better understanding of how the dynamics of race and class have intertwined and changed over time.

The "Enduring" and the "Perpetuated" Ghetto/Barrio

Gilbert Osofsky in an essay entitled "The Enduring Ghetto" broadly interpreted the black urban experience during the twentieth century.[9] The value of such a concept as the enduring ghetto is that it focuses on the continuity of ghetto life in American cities. The term could be equally applied to the Chicano urban barrio experience. Though ghettos and barrios have persisted, the concept of the ghetto as enduring somehow implies that they are static. Ghettos and barrios have been perpetuated but they have changed as urban society has changed. The Harlem of 1915 is greatly different from the Harlem of 1981. The East Los Angeles barrios of 1910 are radically different from those today. Certainly the basic parameters of ghettos and barrios continue, but external forces shaped by a changing economy, a changing ecology, a changing demography, and a changing political structure have affected the internal dynamics of these distinct racial minority areas. By viewing the historical development of these areas through the processes of ghettoization and barrioization perhaps historians and other scholars may understand better how and why they have been perpetuated.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Albert Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930 (Cambridge, 1979); Richard Griswold del Castillo, The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979); Mario Barrera, Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality (Notre Dame, 1979); Mario Garcia, Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920 (New Haven, 1981).

2. See, for example, the following studies: August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto (New York, 1976, third ed.), esp. chs. 3 and 6; Richard Wade, Slavery in the Cities (New York, 1964); Leon Witwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago, 1961); Reynolds Farley, "The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States," Journal of Social History, I (Spring 1968); David Katzman, Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century (Urbana, 1973); Kenneth L. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Urbana, 1976); Allan Spear, Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto (Chicago, 1967).

3. Gilbert Osofsky, Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto (New York, 1964); Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape; Theodore Hershberg, et al., "A Tale of Three Cities: Blacks and Immigrants in Philadelphia: 1850-1880, 1930, and 1970," Annals of the America Academy, 441 (January 1979); Spear, Black Chicago; Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, ch. 6.

4. Lawrence Cardoso, Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931 (Tucson, 1980); Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society; Ricardo Romo,

"The Urbanization of Southwestern Chicanos during the Early Twentieth Century," New Scholar 5:2 (1977); Garcia, Desert Immigrants; Louise A. N. Kerr, "The Mexicans of Chicago, 1920-1970," (Ph.D. dissertation, 1976); Pedro Castillo, "The Making of a Mexican Barrio: Los Angeles, 1890-1920," (Ph.D. dissertation, 1978).

5. Morrill and Donaldson, "Georgraphic Perspectives on the History of Black America"; Farley, "The Urbanization of Negroes in the United States"; Karl E. Tauber and Alma F. Tauber, Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change (Chicago, 1965).

6. Romo, "The Urbanization of Southwestern Chicanos"; Albert Camarillo, "Chicanos in the Cities: A Framework for the Study of Chicano Urban History," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (San Francisco, 1978); Leo Grebler, et al., The Mexican-American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority (New York, 1970).

7. Stephan Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970 (Cambridge, 1973), ch. 8; Hershberg, "A Tale of Three Cities"; Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape.

8. Barrera, Race and Class in the Southwest; Camarillo, Chicanos in a Changing Society; Romo, "Work and Restlessness: Occupational and Spatial Mobility among Mexicans in Los Angeles, 1918-1928," Pacific Historical Review, 46 (May 1977); Mark Reisler, By The Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Labor Before World War II (New York, 1977); Castillo, "The Making of a Mexican Barrio."

9. "The Enduring Ghetto," Journal of American History, 55 (September 1968).

END

U.S. DEPT. OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT (OERI)

ERIC®

DATE FILMED

SEP. 15. 1986